Compliments
Judd Stewart

M 1661

WHERE I SAW LINCOLN.

ADDRESS

at the Sixth Annual Lincoln Banquet,

February 12, 1909.

By HOMER ANDERSON,
First Vice President of
LINCOLN SOCIETY,
Peekskill, N. Y.

(Corporal, Co. I, 90 Reg. O. V. I.)

MENU

Columbia Oysters

Vegetable Soup

Stuffed Olives, Salted Almonds

Kennebec Salmon

Potato Chips

Ohio Lamb Chops

Sweet Potatoes Browned, Peas

Illinois Sherbet, Kentucky Persimmons

Roast Turkey, Cranberry Sauce

Celery, Boiled Turnips, String Beans

Fruit, Nuts, Raisins

Ice Cream, Assorted Cake

Roquefort Cheese, Crackers

Cream Cheese

Coffee, Cigars

White Rock Water

Part of Introductory Remarks by the President.

"Gentlemen: Possibly I have said so much about Ohio, because our first speaker was born in that State. You will notice on the program that we have Ohio lamb chops. Mr. Anderson prepared this program, and as a loyal son of Ohio, a loyal adopted citizen of Peekskill, as an old soldier, and as the first vice-president of our society, I now present to you Mr. Homer Anderson."

Mr. Anderson responded, and was closely followed and applauded. His address in full will be found on page 2 of the Highland Democrat.

At the conclusion of Mr. Anderson's beautiful address President Everinghim continued.

I APPRECIATE the compliment the President has paid to my native State. It certainly is a great State, and I am proud of it. It produces great things, and it has become an aphorism that there are two roads to distinction: "Some men are born great, some are born in Ohio." Mr. Taft and I try to carry our honors modestly; Mr. Taft has had about all the good things the people have to bestow upon a man; it was my misfortune to leave a State where they make it a business to shear sheep, and settle amongst a people who make it a pastime to shear lambs.

The most observable advantage Mr. Taft has over myself is his size. There was a time when I aspired to match his dimensions, but having to abandon hope in that direction, I never ventured to match him in any other way.

I can better understand now why the executive committee of this society keeps an Ohio man at the head of its dinner committee. They think that all Ohio men have, like Mr. Taft, the Ohio appetite for good things, and may, therefore, make good providers. At the last meeting of the executive committee some of them were solicitous to know if I could not provide a course of opossum, as that appeared to be an attractive dish at the present day. They did not know that they had already

played opossum in making believe I was a good enough talker for a place on their program.

With the aid of Commissary Frye I was able to procure a few persimmons; but we learned that the only opossum in all the South that was fit to eat had already been fed to Mr. Taft. We were able to procure the few persimmons only by reason of a trick that had been played with those prepared for Mr. Taft. It is supposable that some Tillman Democrat substituted green ones for the dainty ripe permissions that were to have been served with Mr. Taft's opossum. The effect of a green persimmon is to tie the mouth and throat into a double bow knot. It was fortunate that a man-of-war was ready to take Mr. Taft on a sea voyage where he would not be required to make a speech for a few days; and it was fortunate for us that we got the ripe instead of the green fruit.

After all, that Tillman Democrat may have done the country a service, for the effects of persimmons on Mr. Taft led him to so carefully inspect the needs of the Panama Canel that he will see to it that there shall be no green persimmon policy in the construction of that great waterway. I hope, after four years more, you will be able to say, "More glory to Ohio for giving us Bill Taft!"

I understand fully that I am not detailed to begin the "flow of soul" tonight because of any marked qualifications of my own as a speaker, but rather, because, as one of Lincoln's vast army, I might be supposed to have some recollections worth repeating upon an occasion like this.

I had a notion that I saw this bust of Lincoln twinkle an eye when the president spoke of me as an old soldier; for Mr. Lincoln once gave a cane to a friend, and said to him: "I give you this cane to help you when you are old. I know you will live to be old, because 'the good die young'."

From the very beginning of the war, as a boy, I took a lively interest in every event that transpired, with a patriotism I believe to have been of the genuine article, even if it might have been mixed with some boyish enthusiasm. It led me to seek participation in those events, and I enlisted and started from home a second time before, at the age of sixteen, I was allowed to become a real soldier. Then some of the hardest campaigning of the war, under Buell and Rosecrans, used up my strength and I was honorably discharged.

For those not fitted for the soldier life there was another way of serving the country and serving it well. That was in the U. S. Sanitary Com-

mission, which corresponded to the present Red Cross. During the latter part of the war I was engaged in that service, and that is how I came to be a witness of some of the thrilling culminating events of the war.

In March, 1865, President Lincoln visited Gen. Grant at his headquarters at City Point, Va., at the junction of the Apomattox and James Rivers. At the time I was in charge of the Sanitary Commission department of the Cavalry Corps Hospital on the Apomattox River, about a mile from Grant's headquarters, and in sight of Butler's Lookout at Point of Rocks. On the morning of the 27th of March, from my tent, I could see Gen. Sheridan's command crossing the Apomattox, near Point of Rocks, on its way to Five Forks, a stronghold of the enemy below Petersburg. As soon as Sheridan reached his destination, he got busy, as Sheridan was like the boy whose mother was looking for him. She asked a neighbor if she had seen her boy Johnny. The neighbor replied, "No, I hain't seen him, but there's a fight going on around the corner." One result of Sheridan's getting busy was to keep us busy at the hospital. I hardly slept on the nights of March 31 and April 1 and 2, as there was an almost constant stream of wounded from the front.

Somewhat after midnight on April 1, or very early in the morning of April 2, which was Sunday, while awaiting the arrival of an expected ambulance train, I went out in the cool night air to get myself wide awake. As I walked toward my own tent my face was toward Petersburg, and I just chanced to see a skyrocket shoot heavenward somewhat to the right of Petersburg. Knowing it must be a signal, I stopped and watched for developments. Almost immediately there was a blaze of light all along our lines that confronted Petersburg, and the flash was followed by a terrific roar of cannon that came to us like reverberating thunder. After the first volley the firing became irregular, but was kept up without cessation. After a while I saw two other rockets still farther to the right, and the firing opened all along the lines towards Richmond. This was the beginning of the historic bombardment of Petersburg and Richmond that resulted in their capture.

It was a magnificent spectacle. But it was more than a grand sight. The moment those cannon illumined the horizon, those who witnessed it felt that the final struggle had begun; that this was the beginning of the end; that the war would soon be over. The war over! What that meant no one could understand who had no part in

those terrible times. No mold was ever made for the tongue or pen to describe how the thought thrilled one's soul, under the spell of that starry night, the suffering in the tents close by, the blazing line of fire, with here and there bright trails of bombshells, and the loud booming of cannon. Although that cannonade meant destruction and death, nothing could be more gloriously thrilling than the thought that it meant the end of carnage and peace to the distracted country. A thought that it might mean defeat for us never once entered my mind; for Sherman was just below in the Carolinas, and Warren, and Hancock, and Sheridan, and Grant, and our own Cortlandtown boys were out there on the firing line.

Mr. Lincoln, only a mile further away, was of course an observer of all this. It has been said that he often presented a pathetic figure. To my mind, there has rarely been a picture of more pathos than that of Abraham Lincoln, standing comparatively alone under the leafless trees, in the isolated, almost abandoned camp of his greatest general, contemplating that sublime midnight spectacle that was of such vital importance to him. We have heard of arrogant victors. We have read how, near the ending of the Trojan war, flushed with his victory over Hector,

"High o'er the slain the great Achilles
stands,
Begirt with heroes and surrounding
bands."

There, at obscure City Point, the Commander-in-Chief in this, the greatest of wars, had not at his side a single general, or a statesman, or a conspicuous citizen to whom he could unburden his heart. But we know that with whatever exaltation of soul he may have experienced, there was mingled a sorrow for the slain, and for all, friend and foe, who had suffered.

This bombardment proved to be, indeed, the beginning of the end. The next day, the 3d of April, Grant and Lincoln entered the battered and desolated city of Petersburg.

The following Saturday, the 8th of April, when Grant was closing about Lee's army at Apomattox Court House, President Lincoln came to our hospital to see the sick and wounded. All the soldiers who were able to be about were formed in a line of single rank, front face, and the President walked the full length of the long line and shook the hand of each man and said a word to him. Then he went through all the tents and shook hands with every man who occupied a cot. It was upon this occasion that I had the honor of shaking hands with Abraham Lincoln.

I wish to express my disapproval of those magazine writers, who in this centenary of Lincoln's birth, have vied with each other in making him appear ridiculous. To me it seems absurd to suppose that a man who patronized the tailors of our capital city never had clothes to fit him; that so busy a man as he always took particular pains to fasten his necktie at one side of his collar; or that he ordered especial high silk hats for himself, for he could only obtain them by having them made to order.

Nor is it conceivable to me, that the man whose letter to-day is hung in Oxford University as a specimen of the purest English and most beautiful diction; that the man whose second inaugural address was pronounced by a London authority to be the ablest State paper extant; that the man who uttered the battlefield speech which is in every school boy's mouth, and whose oratory has been declared to be second to none—it is not conceivable to me that such a man used only a vulgar vernacular in his daily talk.

Upon that occasion at City Point my observation of Mr. Lincoln was very close, and I have been credited with being an accurate observer. I tried to see something homely about him, something uncouth, something shambly. I saw none of these things. I noted his

unusually tall figure (but he would not appear odd on that account today, because there are more tall men now than then); he was dignified in appearance; he was becomingly dressed in black in the style of the day and as became a man of his age and position. He had the manner of a gentleman—I may say of a gentle gentleman; his voice as we heard it was subdued and kindly; his eyes were mild but all-observing; and his face that he once himself described as "poor, lean and lank," was a strong face marked with lines of mingled gentleness and sadness that redeemed it from being homely. The close grasp of his hand attested the sympathetic great heartedness of the great man. The picture he impressed upon my mind that day has never faded. How I prized it, when, just one week later the hand of a coward gave the majestic Lincoln "to the ages" and caused him to be numbered with the victims of that terrible war.

Once, I stood as a picket guard in sight of Kentucky's most beautiful city, when it was threatened by the enemy. One tour of my duty came just after midnight, and I have not forgotten how solemn everything appeared to me. As I stood alone, leaning on my gun, I could almost feel the darkness, yet overhead the stars twinkled just

as if they were looking only upon "peace and good will on earth." The lights of the city had gone out, and the city slept. Quiet reigned everywhere. Even the vast armies slept beside their idle guns. It was an impressive silence, provoking meditation, and I remember wondering if it would not be better if the world always slept. My reveries were broken by the deep tones of a church bell in the city striking the hour of the night. It was 2 o'clock. As the strokes came to me on the hill, vibrating on the still night air, they seemed to pass on, and I listened to them dying away in the distance, on and on, as if they had not ceased, but had gone into space, to go on through all eternity. And so it seems to me Lincoln did not die, his spirit did not depart, but lives on and will live on, an inspiration to good in men, and the best in government, so long as men shall live.